

From: [John Martens](#)
To: [Scanlon, Amy](#)
Subject: 121-127 Gilman St.
Date: Monday, November 25, 2013 11:43:16 AM
Attachments: [H3 VRA.pdf](#)

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Ms. Scanlon,

I intend to speak at the Landmarks Commission hearing this evening, and I would like to present the following information (please also see the attachment):

A couple of years ago I was involved in determining the precise relationship of the volume of the proposed Edgewater Hotel to that of the rest of the Mansion Hill Historic District. Over a period of several months I compiled a database documenting the physical characteristics of the buildings in the district, with a focus on height and volume. The data was compiled through the City of Madison Assessor information, aerial photographs, and physically walking the district. Given the complexity of this information, absolute accuracy was impossible, but in the calculations of volume and height, every attempt was made to use reasonable judgment for fair and accurate information. The methodology is transparent, and consequently input figures are presented for those who may wish to verify the accuracy of the final calculations.

With this data, it is easy to obtain the actual ratios of volume and height of the proposed construction relative to its Visually Related Area, and the final conclusions leave little doubt that the proposed development is not compatible with its surroundings.

Being “compatible”, of course is a subjective quality, and frankly I also believe we need to realize our population is expanding, our societal standards are shifting to accommodate greater urban densities, and those high level needs should allow some flexibility in allowing new buildings that are larger than those in their surroundings. On the other hand, there is a quantitative limit on how much bigger something can be and still be considered compatible. I would argue that new construction one and a half times the average of the volume of existing construction is compatible, twice the volume would require a powerful argument to be compatible, but three times the volume would clearly not be compatible. In the case of 121-127 Gilman Street, the volume of the three proposed towers is **14 times** the average volume of all the buildings in the visually related area. By no stretch of anyone's imagination can such a relationship be considered “compatible.”

To even consider the scale of these towers as being compatible with other buildings in Madison's most valuable historic district would constitute a grotesque manipulation of the meaning of our well-established standards and a mockery of the very concept of the

protection of a historical district.

Thank you,

John Martens

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